

TOWN OF STOW
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the September 10, 2015 Economic Development and Industrial Commission Meeting

Members Present: Bob Collings, Rich Eckel, Tom Farnsworth, Serena Howlett,
Kevin Whalen

Also Present: Celeste Versoi - Interested Resident
Ken Duval - Interested Resident/Duval Sign Company

Tom Farnsworth called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm

Meeting Minutes of August 13, 2015

Bob Collings moved to accept the minutes of August 13, 2015.

Tom Farnsworth Seconded.

VOTED: (4-0) in favor, Rich Eckel abstained.

Meeting Minutes of August 27, 2015

Tom Farnsworth moved to accept the minutes of August 27, 2015.

Rich Eckel Seconded.

VOTED: (5-0) in favor.

Correspondence / Updates

Branding Workshop

Serena Howlett noted that she attended a branding workshop in British Columbia, in a community that was interested in keeping the character of the place, while also attracting more business. A copy of the video might generate some ideas as a resource and for brainstorming purposes. The Commission agreed it would be interesting to see the video.

The Commission also discussed that branding would have to be carefully done to not marginalize certain stakeholders the Commission is trying to support. Ken Duval noted that from a corporate standpoint identifying what the Town wants to be seen as can help the commission work backward to the right message.

Rich Eckel said it would be interesting to survey Stow residents on what they would be looking for in terms of business growth and branding.

Noise Bylaw

Bob Collings provided an update on the noise bylaw.

Earth Removal Operations

Jesse Steadman and Bob Collings described the general nature of the Earth Removal Bylaw updates and the response from attendees at the Selectmen's meeting.

Discussion of Mixed Use Petition

The Board discussed whether EDIC's opinion will be represented at Town meeting. The Board agreed further research into the Charter would be necessary.

Appointment of Celeste Versoi as Non-Voting Associate Member

Bob Collings moved to appoint Celeste Versoi as an Associate Member of the Economic Development Commission.

Tom Farnsworth Seconded.

VOTED: (5-0) Unanimously in favor.

Sign Bylaw

Bob Collings said he found the document on the Constitutionality of Signage very interesting, as it suggests sign must be uniformly regulated across uses. Bob Collings noted that agricultural cannot be a preferential group for signage.

Ken Duval, Stow resident and owner of Duval Sign Company in Shirley, said that in all Towns that he has dealt with, the biggest complaints they hear about is why business owners cannot create certain signs. Enforcement is the key and if the bylaw is not enforceable through fines then it is useless he said. They are unenforceable because there is often no one to enforce it. Jesse Steadman described the enforcement provisions under Chapter 40A of Massachusetts law.

Bob Collings asked why have bylaws if they are not enforceable and each person should be treated in a uniform manner. Ken Duval said the Towns want to maintain aesthetics in a Town. Bob Colling said that he sees a sign bylaw as something where someone should look at the results of what people consider more pleasant or pleasing to the eye. A sign bylaw can be a guide but not a law.

Kevin Whalen asked if it up to the sign creator to figure out what the bylaw wants. Ken Duval said the permit is then issued to the applicant based on a reasonable application.

Bob Collings asked why regulations on private property are tolerated. Ken Duval discussed some of the purposes of the sign bylaw, including health, safety, welfare, protection of property rights, etc. Kevin Whalen said that, as a business owner, you want to comply based on what your neighboring businesses are doing. Kevin Whalen said there is a reason to have sign bylaws and how the community looks is an important aspect of needing

signage. Celeste Versoi said if a company believes that the sign creates an opportunity for businesses that should be the purpose of the bylaw.

Ken Duval said it could be helpful to have a process outlined in the bylaw regarding how to get flexibility in the sign size. Bob Collings said he appreciates the input of Ken Duval and that as this process goes forward it could be helpful to discuss. Keven Whalen asked Ken Duval to let the Commission know if he finds something that really works in a town,

The Commission discussed if there are any groups that have knowledge about sign bylaws that would be interested in attending the Commission meetings.

Serena Howlett said that bylaw revision will be a moving target and it may not be possible to know beforehand what would stand under Constitutional Law. Tom Farnsworth suggested that there is a balance between trying to fit within requirements and within broader case law.

Way-finding sign regulations could be looked at said Ken Duval. He said that it could be looked at for similarity between them and street signs. Ken Duval also said to look at logos and typeface. Bob Colling said that some companies have their own branding, while others may want to have an artistic look.

The Commission discussed whether Ken Duval would be interested in sitting on the Commission as an Associate Member.

Celeste Versoi asked if the Commission is looking at the issue of signage in terms of complaints heard in the community. The Commission noted that they did receive feedback from some.

Rich Eckel asked if the Commission would be interested in having Ken Duval redline the sign bylaw to provide a draft for revisions. Ken Duval said it may be more helpful to have a comparison of sign bylaws across towns.

The EDIC discussed how to create a common interest to build community in business. Rich Eckel said that it is a strategic goal. Ken Duval said even if the Town only has a small number of businesses, they can still have an impact on business growth on the government side.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jesse Steadman